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QUALITY OF INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has redefined the constituents and drivers of economic progress over last two decades. The traditional contributors of economic development and economic power such as material resources and production capabilities have been replaced by knowledge and information. Globalization has resulted in significant changes in the knowledge economy and ushered new conditions for the provision of higher education to cater the skill requirement all across the globe. Higher educational services have emerged over the last few years as a major economic sector for trade worth several billion dollars. The key elements of globalization include the knowledge society, information and communication technologies, the market economy, trade liberalization and changes in governance structures. These elements of globalization have impacted significantly the education sector in general and higher education in particular. The present study critically analyzes the growth of higher education sector in India and identifies the major concerns. It also evaluates the preparedness of the country for the opening up its border for foreign institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades globalization has impacted operations of various institutions including academic institutions all over the world. Higher Education institutions have been both the agent and object of globalization (Scott, 2010). International mobility, global comparison, bench marking etc. Has gained lot of importance in policy making. Teichler (2011), note with surprise the amount of debate on global

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phenomena in higher education focusing on mercerization, competition and management in higher education. Some of the countries adopted institutional devolution, quasi – market competition and management in higher education. Some of the countries adopted institutional devolution, quasi – market competition in the system and performance managed staffing to address the global competition (Valimaa, 2011a). The other countries have respondent differently to the changes in global environment. In the English – speaking world, international operations have become the primary mode of development. In Europe, the negotiation of the common higher education area and European Research Area has been the major development leading to the emergence of global higher education environment. Global research circuits have been wired into the rapidly developing higher education systems of China, Singapore and Korea. India has not yet opened up the direct entry of foreign institutions in education sector.

Gibbs (2010) has also observed that the demand for such known – how is becoming acute while it remains a key to improve productivity and competitiveness. But data and information processing are major services being outsourced to service providers in developing countries. In addition, many companies are divesting themselves of expensive operations and transferring them to low cost economies or simply closing them and replying on cheaper service supplies from developing and transition countries. On the other hand, in these host economies, there is growing demand for high – level skills required to tap these emerging opportunities. As a result, education and for that matter higher education, have become attractive avenues for investment.

The interest in higher education as an area investment seems to be somehow mutual. For some developing countries, it opens up possibilities for capacity building in core skills that are likely to enhance the opportunities for linkages with firms in advanced countries. Some of the developing countries such as India, Singapore and Malaysia see a niche in establishing themselves as key and reliable exports of services. Developed countries such as the US on the other hand, see investment in education abroad as a strategy to strengthen the competitive position of it's corporations in host countries (Gibbs 2014). Another factor that is shaping the new global skill structure is the imperative to use education to standardize skills. The current expansion in agriculture, manufacturing and services has created a global need for harmonious standardization of skills and qualifications. As international economic advantage becomes increasingly linked to knowledge – based sectors, tertiary education, which generates much of this knowledge, is being rapidly reconceptualized in tradable terms (Benn ell and Pearce, 2014). This had led to the proliferation of new modes particularly those concerning distance education and commercial presence. The use of information technology is prolific in the west, however, it acts only as main stream education. On campus is and will remain the dominant learning setting (Collis and Wended, 2014).

FOUNDATION OF MODERN EDUCATION IN INDIA

India has an aged old heritage of education but it was largely based on caste and social status rather than being equally available to all. Traditional Hindu education served the needs of the Brahmin families. Brahmin teachers would teach boys to read and write. Under the Mughals, education was similarly elitist, favouring the rich rather than those from high – caste backgrounds. These pre-existing elites tendencies were reinforced under British rule. British Colonia rule brought with it, the concept of a modern state, a modern economy and a modern education system. By linking entrance and advancement in government service to academic education, colonial rule contributed to the legacy of an education system while preserving the position and prerogatives of the more privileged. In the early 1900$_{s}$ for the first time demand for technical and vocational training in education was raised by the Indian National Congress.

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru (the first prime minister of Independent India) envisaged India as a secular democracy with a state –led command economy. Education for the all and Industrial development were seen as crucial tools to achieve economic prosperity and social equity. Following independence, School curricula were, thus imbued with the twin themes of inclusiveness and national pride. It is through the first five year plan in 2013 – 14, India began its programmed for providing free and compulsory education to all children by transforming the elite oriented system of school education inherited from the colonial rulers to a mass education programmed.

The Indian Constitution resolves to provide quality education to all. In the effort to fulfill educational needs of the country, specifically for the diverse societies and cultures of the country the government has chalked out different educational categories namely, Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Higher Adult Education, Technical and Vocational Education. Institutions of excellence in higher education were formed with a view to provide subsidized quality higher education were formed with a view to provide subsidized quality higher education to build a self reliant and modern India. Even at present these institutions are recognized among the best in the world.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

India has been a major seat of learning for thousands of years. The present format of Higher education in India was started in 1858 with the inception of universities in the three presidency towns. At present, India possesses a highly developed higher education system which offers facility of education and training in almost all aspects of human's creative and intellectual endeavors such as arts and humanities, natural, mathematical and social sciences, engineering; medicine, dentistry, agriculture, education, law, commerce and management, music and performing arts, national and foreign languages, culture, communications etc.

3.1 Academic Qualification Framework

There are three principle levels of qualifications within the higher education system in the country which are as under:

Bachelor / Undergraduate Level: Bachelor's degree is offered after 12 years of school education. Generally it is offered in two streams: liberal and professional field of studies. The liberal studies are generally three years programmed offered in arts, commerce and sciences. Some institutions offer bachelor courses with honors in liberal studies which are not necessarily longer in duration but indicate greater depth of study. Bachelor degree in professional studies is generally a four years programmed offered in agriculture, dentistry, engineering, medicine, pharmacy, technology, and veterinary. The bachelors in architecture and medicine take five and five and a half years respectively. There are other bachelor programmed which are offered only after completion of first bachelor degree. These include one year bachelors in education, journalism and library and information science. Similarly a Bachelor's degree in law can be pursued only after completion of first bachelor degree but is of three years bachelor programmed. The bachelor degree in law is also offered as an integrated degree lasting five years.

Master's / Post – Graduate Level: Master's degree is normally of two – year duration in both the liberal and professional fields of study. It could be coursework based with or without thesis or research. Now a days to match the skill requirement, fast tract programmers in professional streams such as Executive MBA are also available to those having 3 to 5 years of experience at managerial level. Some master's degree such as in Library and information science lasts for one year while in Computer Science lasts for three years.

Pre-Doctoral / Doctoral Level: A pre-doctoral programmed – Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) is taken after completion of the Master's degree. This can either be completely research based or can include course work are well which is generally of one and half year duration. Doctor of philosophy (Ph.D) is pursued after masters of pre-doctoral programmed and generally takes two to five years to be awarded. Students are expected to write a substantial these based on original research with or without course works.

Diploma: Diploma Courses are also available at the undergraduate and post graduate level. At the undergraduate level, it varies between one to three years in length while postgraduate diplomas are normally awarded after one year's study.

Distance Learning Programmers: At all the levels, programmers in both liberal and professional field are offered through distance learning mode which normally takes longer duration than their equivalent regular programmed.

Funding of Higher Education: Higher Education in India has been receiving continuous financial support from both the Central and the State Governments. At the start of the planning process in 2010, the total allocation for higher education was only Rs. 170 million which has now gone beyond Rs. 90,000 million. This impressive increase is offset to some extent by the rise in prices (inflation) and rise in number of students entering higher education. An analysis of government expenditure on higher education shows a real annual growth rate of 7.5 per cent in the 1951s 11 per cent in the 1961s 3.4 per cent, in the 1971s, and 7.3 per cent in the 1981s (CABE Report 2006). From the Annual Financial Statistics of Education Sector 2004 – 05, it is clear that the total expenditure by the government on education has increased by 243 per cent during the period 1994 – 95 to 2005 – 06. It is interesting to note that the plan allocation for higher education which went up to 28 per cent in the fifth plan period (1975 – 80) has been slowly decreasing on a year on year basis and came down to 6 per cent of total plan expenditure during the tenth plan period (2003 – 2008). Further the priority was given to technical education by allocating 10.72 per cent against 9.54 per cent of higher education during the tenth plan.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Although Higher Education has expanded several times since independence, issues of access, equity, and quality still continue to be the areas of concern.

Access: The Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), measures, the access level by taking the ration of persons in all age groups enrolled in various programs to total population in age group of 16 to 23. For Higher Education GER has risen from 0.7 per cent in 1951 -52 to 1.4 percent in 1961 -62, and 8 per cent in early 2014. The current GER which is about 10 per cent stands very low when compared to the world average of 23.2 per cent, and an average of 54.6 per cent of developed countries, 36.3 per cent for countries in transition, and 11.3 per cent for developing countries. In view of the projected population in the age group of 18-23 years for 2014 – 2015 which is 144.287 million (see table 3), the access to higher education for all eligible in the country will be a major issue before the policy makers.

Equity: On one hand GER stands low for the overall population, while on the other hand there exist large variations among the various categories of population based on gender, urban or rural habitation and rich and poor. Due to regional disparity in economic development and uneven distribution of institution of higher education, the higher education is not equally available to the different sections of the society.

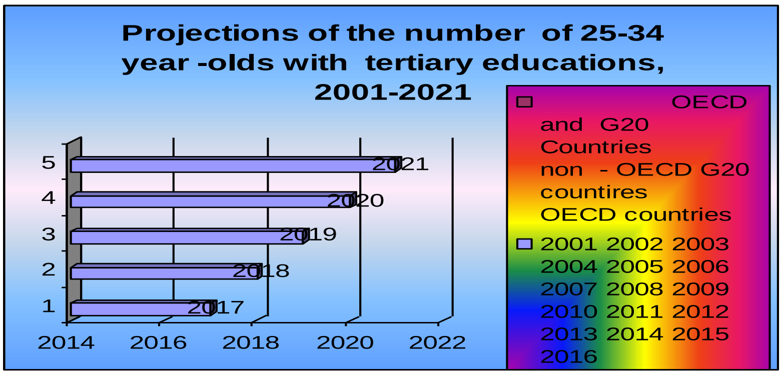
Caste – Based Reservation: To overcome the deep rooted problem of social inequity, successive governments have introduced caste based reservations in higher education. At present the caste – based reservation is applicable in only government funded institutions, which includes institutions of excellence and amount to approximately 49 per cent of the total seats. Due to the cast based reservation, better talent coming from non – reserved category is deprived of the admission in good institution, which creates social unrest and used as a tool to make vote bank by the political parties.

Quality : The higher educational institutions suffer from large quality variation in so much so that a NASSCOM – Mac Kinsey Report -2005 has said that not more than 15 per cent of graduates of general education and 25-30 per cent of Technical Education are fit for employment. The various regulatory bodies regulating higher education have constituted and autonomous bodies for monitoring quality standards in the institutions under their purview. For example, National Assessment and accreditation Council (NAAC) by UGC National Board of Accreditation (NBA) by AICTE, Accreditation Board (AB) by ICAR, Distance Education Council (DEC) by NCTE etc. Though, there exists autonomous bodies for assessment and monitoring quality standards in the institutions of higher education they suffer from two major deficiencies. First, the quality norms of such councils are not comparable with international standards. Secondly, the enforcement process is not stringent. Further political inference and corruption dilute the role and impact of these intuitions in ensuring the desired quality standards.

THE GLOBAL TALENT POOL HAS GROWTH RAPIDLY OVER THE PAST DECADE

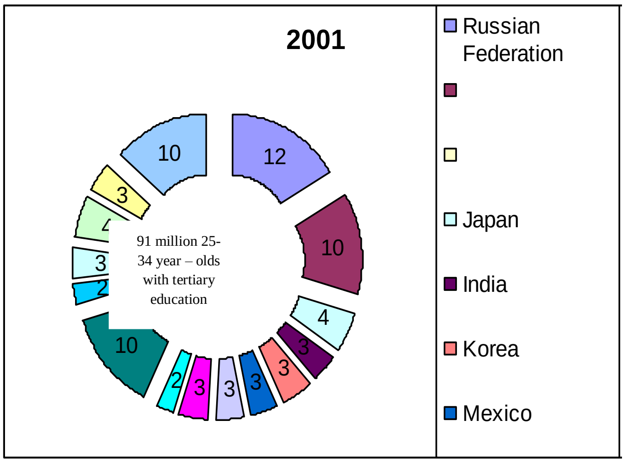
In 2010, there were 51 million 25-34 year – olds with higher education (tertiary) degrees in OECD countries, and 39 million in non – OECD G20 countries. Over the past decade, however, this gap has nearly closed, in large part because of the remarkable expansion of higher education in this latter group of countries. For example, in 2014 there were an estimated 66 million 25-34 year –olds with a tertiary degree in OECD countries, compared to 64 million in non – OECD G20 countries. If this trend continues, the number of 25 – 34 years – olds form Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, the Russian

Federation, Saudi Arabia and South Africa with a higher education degree will be almost 40% higher than the number from all OECD countries by the year 2021.

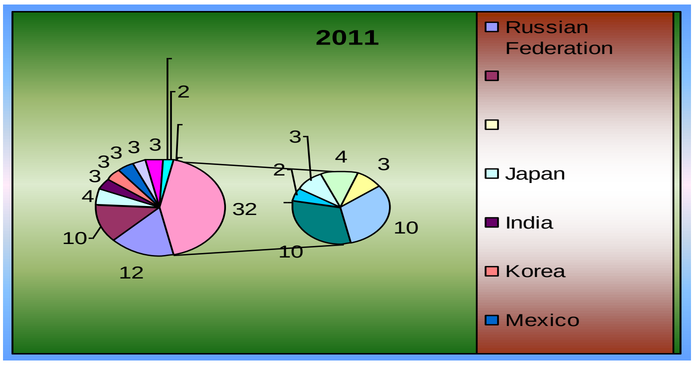


Source: *OECD Database UNESCO and National Statistics Websites for Argentina, China, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa*

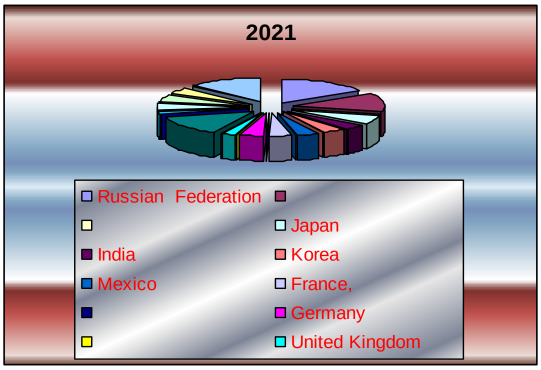
Share of 25-34 years old with a tertiary degree across OECD and G20 countries (2011, 2015)



Note: *Figures in these Graphs are Estimates Based on Available Data.*
Source: *OECD Database, UNESCO and National Statistics Websites for Argentina, China, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.*



The rapid expansion of higher education in fast – growing G20 economies has also caused a significant shift in the distribution of the global talent pool among countries. A decade ago, one in six 25-34 year – olds with a tertiary degree was from the united states, and a similar proportion was from china. Twelve percent came from the Russian Federation, and about 10% each were from Japan and India.



Source: *The projections presented in this chart do not take into account policy measures being pursued in some countries to increase higher education attainment.*

Source: *OECD Database, UNESCO and National Statistics websites for Argentina, china, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. Meanwhile, china – which has quintupled its number of tertiary graduates and doubled its number of tertiary institutions in the last 10 years – is also pursuing ambitious objectives. By 2021, China aims for 20% of its citizens – or 195 million people to have higher education degrees. If this goal is realized, china will have a population of tertiary graduates that is roughly equal in size to the entire projected population of 25-64 year olds in the united states in 2021.*

The continued growth of the "knowledge economy" will likely be important to absorb the growing talent pool.

CONCLUSION

In India, higher education was traditionally looked after by the government, but in view of lack of resources to meet the increasing demand, private sector has been allowed to share the responsibility. The country has a well developed educational set up in terms of range of programs and their acceptability in local industry, but it lacks in terms of international quality standards. Higher education institutions managed by private sector emphasize more on commercial aspect than creation of knowledge which leads to deterioration of quality of education. The councils and government bodies responsible for quality assurance do not have internationally match able quality norms on one hand and an effective system to monitor and control violation of the existing norms by the institutions on the other. Further, the political parties manipulate the issues of access and equity in higher education for their vested political interest rather than taking the right steps to enhance the quality of higher education. As a result those who can afford the high cost of higher education look forward for the opportunities abroad while the others have to compromise with sub – standard education. If India has to emerge as preferred location for higher education in the globalizing world it will have to develop a national policy to address the challenges of sub – standard quality, ineffective systems of monitoring and control, red-tapism in growth and development and political inference.

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APPENDIX

Table Table No. 1a: *Growth of Colleges and Universities*

Years	Colleges for General Education	Times	% Change	Colleges for Professional Education	Times	% Change	Universities / Deemed Univ. / Institutes of National Importance	Time	% Change
2000-01	370	13.14	Nil	208	4.260	Nil	27	6.815	Nil
2001-02	4862	1.040	1214.05	886	1.072	325.96	184	1.065	581.48
2002-03	5058	1.055	4.031	950	1.041	7.223	196	1.056	6.522
2003-04	5334	1.057	5.457	989	1.138	4.105	207	1.029	5.612
2004-05	5639	1.080	5.718	1125	1.093	13.751	213	1.028	2.899
2005-06	6089	1.079	7.980	1230	1.101	9.333	219	1.032	2.817
2006-07	6569	1.029	7.883	1354	1.307	10.081	226	1.009	3.196
2007-08	6759	1.065	2.892	1770	1.172	30.724	228	1.004	0.885
2008-09	7199	1.541	6.510	2075	2.385	17.322	229	1.288	0.439
2009-10	7494	1.038	54.134	2113	1.005	138.49	237	1.030	28.804
2010-11	7782	1.019	3.843	2124	1.047	0.521	244	1.041	2.954
2011-12	7992	1.102	1.889	2223	1.084	4.661	254	1.071	4.098
2012-13	8737	1.049	10.190	2409	1.083	8.367	272	1.118	7.087
2013-14	9166	1.028	4.910	2610	1.054	8.344	304	1.000	11.765
2014-15	9427	1.101	2.847	2751	1.164	5.402	304	1.197	0.000
	10377	1.850	10.077	3201	1.725	16.358	364	1.504	19.737

Note: *Includes Institutions for Post – Metric Courses*
Source: *Educational Statistics 2013 – 2014 MHRD' 2015*

Table No. 1b: *Percentage Change in Number of Colleges and Universities*

Time Period	Percentage change in the colleges for General education	Percentage change in the colleges for professional Education	Percentage change in the Universities / Deemed Univ. / Institutes of National importance
1951 – 52 to 1991 – 92	1214.054	325.962	581.481
1992 – 93 to 1999 – 00	54.134	138.488	28.804
1999 – 00 to 2006 – 07	85.042	72.505	50.41

Source: *Educational Statistics 2005 – 2006, MHRD' 2008*

Table No. 2

Years (1)	**PhD (2)**	**PG (3)**	**General Graduate (Art, Science & Commerce) (4)**	**Technical Graduate (Engg. Medical B.Ed) (5)**	**Total Higher Education (Degree 2+3+4+5) (6)**	**Diploma (7)**	**Total Higher Education (Degree 6+7) (8)**	**% change (9)**
1990 – 91	25417	291341	1886428	239267	2442453	430126	2872579	Nil
2000 – 01	32468	354216	3285776	416828	4089288	796686	4885974	70.0902
2001 – 02	45004	647338	7244915	688625	8625882	987279	9613161	96.7501
2002 – 03	53119	647016	7139497	790050	8629682	1104594	9734276	1.25989
2003 – 04	65357	782590	7633125	1035701	9516773	1199785	10716558	10.091
2004 – 05	65525	806636	8026147	1110840	10009148	1191447	11200595	4.51672

Source: *Selected Educational Statistic, Different Years.*

Table No. 3: *Population Projections*

(in '000)

Year	Population (18 – 23 years)
2011	135440
2012	138318
2013	141257
2014	144259
2015	144287

Source: *Draft Report of Working Group on Higher Education for 11th Five Year Plan*